

Officers average 450 tickets daily

# Parking violations keep police busy

By MERIL EDWARDS

Battalion Staff

The Texas A&M University Police Department collected \$91,201 for parking violations last semester, department records show. Police officers issue an average of 450 parking tickets a day at \$5 per violation.

All the money taken in from parking tickets goes into the Parking Facilities Reserve Account administered by the vice president for business, Thomas R. Parsons, director of traffic and security, said.

"Most of the money in this account is reserved for the construction of new parking lots," Parsons said. "Half of my salary comes from this money and 10 police officers are paid out of it. Also 40 percent of our department's operating budget comes from this account."

"The amount of money taken in for tickets has nothing to do with our income. I know people like to say we use the money to raise our salaries, but that's not true."

Parsons said another \$75,000 or so of the account is allocated to grounds maintenance. This money is used for parking lot upkeep: sweeping the lots, repainting lines, traffic signs and parking gates that are often vandalized and must be replaced.

Parsons said if there's a reserve in the account, it stays there to build up for new lot construction.

"The state does not appropriate any money to build new lots," he said.

Two new lot sites are under consideration, Parsons said. Parking Area 62 southwest of Kyle Field

near Wellborn Road has been approved for construction.

"There's no question about the Kyle Field lot," Parsons said. "Construction should begin by May 1 if everything goes according to plan. It's the first bright light I've seen in awhile. I estimate the lot will cost around \$330,000."

The other parking area being considered is northeast of the Zachry Engineering Building. But Parsons said there has been talk of a dorm in that area, too, so any definite development there is uncertain.

Another possibility being discussed is a parking garage behind the Reed McDonald Building.

"The garage would house about 1,000 cars," Parsons said. "But we wouldn't be able to start it until there was a place for the cars parking in that area now. And the construction would take from one to one-and-a-half years."

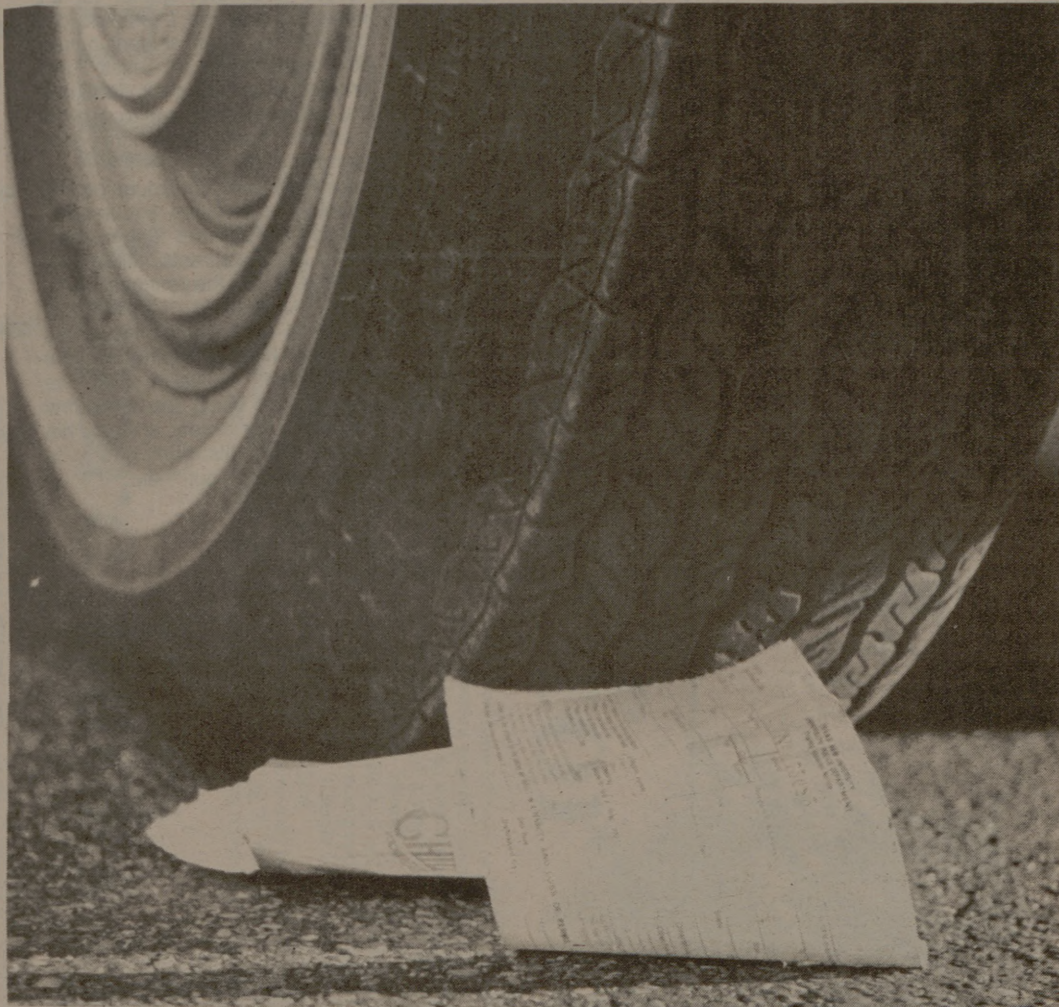
Parsons said the garage cost was estimated at \$3 million.

"There isn't enough money in the reserve," he said, "to pay for the garage. So if we get in a bind, we'd have to raise the price of parking and we don't want to do that."

Parsons said the parking price hasn't been raised since 1973.

"The campus traffic situation has been running more smoothly this semester," he said. "There are fewer cars operating, shuttle bus use is up by 1,500, there are more cycles and more students are riding bikes."

"The gas price is having an effect here, so maybe the traffic and parking will become less frustrating."



With the shortage of parking on campus, parking tickets are a common sight.

## Some students pay tickets; others get away



By MERIL EDWARDS

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If all students paid their parking tickets, the Texas A&M police would have collected more than \$91,201 last semester, but some Aggies don't pay their parking fines.

"Some students get lucky," Janice Scanlin, police administrative assistant, said. "We can't catch everybody, but we try our best."

When students fail to pay their tickets, Scanlin said she first traces their license plate number.

"Nine out of 10 cars are registered under the parent's name and address," she said. "So I get that information through Austin, then match the address with records here at A&M."

Scanlin's next step is to block the student's official transcript so they can't register until their fines are cleared.

"Sometimes students get irate with us when they can't register," Scanlin said. "They think they've successfully evaded their fines because they were given several semesters ago. But Austin may not have their records up to date and that accounts for the delay."

Scanlin said she concentrates more on those with lots of tickets rather than spending extra time on the one-time offender.

"Blocking registration is all we can do," she said. "We send the big

offenders to Student Affairs."

And the one who handles the big offenders, those with 10 tickets or more, is Assistant Director of Student Affairs Jerry Mainord.

Mainord said University regulations specify that an excessive number of tickets requires disciplinary action.

"When I get the name of an offender from the police," Mainord said, "I send the student a letter of charges. He is given time to respond and set up a hearing with me."

Mainord then gives the student a time limit, usually 30 days, to get his tickets taken care of with the police.

"Most students do take care of their tickets," he said. "But failure to respond to my letter or to clearing their record will warrant further disciplinary action."

This further action is usually suspension from the University. Mainord said he only recalls one suspension.

"There are 20,000 students here with permits who abide by the rules and park legally," he said. "We have an obligation to these students to take action against those who abuse the system. About 99 percent of the offenders do not have permits."

Mainord said he saw approximately 90 student offenders last semester.

Doug Graham